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New York

President:	Mr. Alfano	(Italy)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli Frieri

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Security challenges in the Mediterranean

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Security challenges in the Mediterranean

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Italian presidency for convening this meeting.

The word "Mediterranean" literally means "in the middle of the Earth". Figuratively, too, the Mediterranean has found itself, since time immemorial, at the confluence of civilizations, cultures, religions, trade and migration. Developments in the region continue to shape the history and politics of the world. The Mediterranean Sea provides immense economic resources, such as hydrocarbons and fish stocks, and invaluable trade routes. However, its benefits depend on stability and cooperation.

Indeed, the situation in the Mediterranean illustrates that peace and security are inseparable from democratic, economic and social progress, and from the advancement of gender, youth, minority and human rights. Events over the past few years in the region have forcefully — and painfully — made that clear.

Today the Mediterranean faces serious challenges on multiple fronts: the illicit trade in narcotics, weapons and petroleum products; large movements of refugees and migrants, who are preyed upon by human smugglers and traffickers; and maritime piracy. The narcotics trade is also generating deadly spillover effects, such as increased drug use and health crises.

In parts of the region, fragility is being exacerbated by systematic violations of human rights and violence against women and girls. The Mediterranean is also suffering from severe environmental degradation and natural-resource constraints. In recent years, food scarcity and sharp rises in prices have led to social and political unrest. Long-festering regional wounds and sectarian divides have been made worse by atrocity crimes, terrorism, attempts to annihilate minorities, the plundering of cultural heritage, forced displacement and the use of chemical weapons.

Libya's stability is vital for the region. Yet, after years of prolonged transition, the country's institutions remain deeply divided. The United Nations is committed to helping the Libyan people reach an inclusive political settlement. Instability in the Sahel region has contributed to an increase in irregular migration towards Europe. The United Nations will continue to support the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the G-5 Joint Force, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

Achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians is also critical. The United Nations remains committed to providing all possible support towards a just, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the conflict through the two-State solution. A comprehensive political settlement in Cyprus would also mitigate political tensions in the region.

Da'esh will continue to thrive unless the deep political roots of the Syrian conflict are resolved through a credible and comprehensive political process, as foreseen under resolution 2254 (2015). The security gains against terrorist groups in Libya, Iraq and elsewhere may prove reversible if we do not accelerate reconstruction and economic recovery.

I commend refugee host countries for their generosity. There is a clear need to address the drivers of displacement. We must also address the worrisome increase in xenophobia and discrimination against refugees, migrants and minorities. That is a shared global responsibility. It is essential to re-establish the integrity of the refugee-protection regime on both sides of the Mediterranean and to increase resettlement and relocation programmes. Trafficking in human beings should not be isolated from trafficking in cultural property, drugs, weapons and oil, which benefit militias, terrorists and armed groups.

The Libya sanctions regime restricts the movement of arms and related material into and out of Libya. The Panels of Experts on Libya and the Sudan have been investigating the financing of armed groups. Along with the newly re-established Mali sanctions regime, I hope that those tools will be useful in supporting Governments and regions working towards peaceful transitions.

All too often, responses to security challenges in the Mediterranean are undertaken largely or solely through traditional security arrangements or ad hoc solutions. Such approaches carry the risk of prolonging unacceptable status quos or worsening situations if not backed by efforts to address the underlying root causes. Our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have an important role to play in that regard.

The Mediterranean is a global junction of mutually enriching cultures, societies and economies. Yet violence and hatred are threatening that dynamism, to the detriment of the entire world. We should do our utmost to resolve the worst crises of the region, so that it can then continue to contribute its best. I count on countries in the Mediterranean and beyond to reaffirm their proud tradition of openness and solidarity.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, which was, as usual, smart and visionary.

It is now my pleasure to deliver Italy's national statement.

The focus of today's Security Council meeting is on an issue of worldwide implications. The Mediterranean is a small sea, almost the size of a large lake when seen on a map. However, it is where much of our global security is at stake. It is a fact that a great number of the world's crises originate in the Mediterranean basin — the spread of Da'esh, Libya's instability, the Syrian war, new tension in Lebanon, the dangers posed by foreign terrorist fighters, the fragile situation in the Western Balkans, the migration crisis, and the list goes on and on.

Although the Mediterranean amounts to only approximately 1 per cent of the world's surface, a significant part of our global stability and security is played out in that Sea. Italy, located at the centre of the Mediterranean, is bearing the brunt of that insecurity. Our strategy has been to combine solidarity and security. For example, in the course of the migration crisis, we have proved that it is possible to save more than half a million lives at sea and, at the same time, counter fundamentalism and extremists who despise the values of our open and democratic society.

However, we need to do more together as global partners to control the routes that today could be taken by foreign terrorist fighters, following the defeat of Da'esh in Iraq and in Syria. The global coalition against Da'esh has neutralized the safe havens in which terrorists could mastermind attacks against all of us. Italy has done its part as the second-largest contributor to that coalition in Iraq. We have trained almost 30,000 military and police units, but we must remain ever-vigilant against the spread of Da'esh in the Mediterranean and the concrete risk of foreign terrorist fighters returning to North Africa and to Europe.

Therefore, we must deepen information-sharing among our intelligence agencies in order to identify jihadists and halt them in their quest for destruction. Our commitment against terror must be extended far and wide, including in the Sahel, where instability directly affects the security of the Mediterranean. In Libya, after being forced out of Sirte, Da'esh remains a threat, with its roots also in the Sahel. That too is a reason that Libya remains a key challenge for the Security Council. However, in order to further emphasize the moral burden of improving the lives of refugees and migrants who are exploited by criminal organizations in Libya, we must take on greater shared responsibility, with more humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

On the political process in Libya, I will not repeat what I said yesterday in this Chamber (see S/PV.8104). However, I will stress once again that it is crucial for all of us to support the action plan of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. If we miss that chance, all of us, not only Libyans, will pay a heavy price.

The tragic story of Syria should be a reminder to the Libyans that a negotiated solution is vital, and that there is no military short cut. Regional tensions and brutal actions by the Al-Assad regime have made peace in Syria difficult for far too long. Our key objective should always remain the same — to support the political process led by the United Nations. We call on the countries around this table and on the entire United Nations membership to redouble their efforts to encourage a genuine commitment by the Syrian parties to engage in negotiations.

We are also concerned by the latest developments in Lebanon, where Italy has invested deeply in peace and stability, especially in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon peacekeeping mission. We call on all parties to respect the independence and integrity of Lebanon's democratic institutions. There is no role in

Lebanon for any foreign forces or militaries other than the legitimate security forces of the Lebanese State.

In an interconnected world where stability and security are tested by gross violations of human rights and a humanitarian crisis, it is the responsibility of the international community to react. Our reaction must be built upon more political dialogue and more security cooperation, as well as more cultural collaboration. Italy considers culture to be a key pillar of sustainable development. In order to create lasting political solutions in the Mediterranean, we are convinced that we need to invest in human capital, especially in the education of youth. Preserving cultural heritage is also a way to tackle extremism. That is why Italy, together with France, promoted resolution 2347 (2017), which was the first of its kind on the destruction of cultural heritage in armed conflict. Terrorists who destroy cultural sites want to erases peoples' identities. We should therefore always protect such rich and moderate identities, which have shaped a common culture of dialogue and mutual respect in the Mediterranean for millenniums.

In the interest of the security of the Mediterranean, it is also crucial to defend religious freedom and protect religious minorities. If religious freedom is protected, the rule of law and security can be asserted. If such protection is absent, the consequence is instability. For fanatics, religion is only a pretext. They want to hold God hostage to their evil ideologies. Therefore, we must do more to separate those who join their hands in prayer from those who take up arms.

We also recognize that more women have to be protagonists in the Mediterranean. In October, in Rome, we launched the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. It is important to strengthen preventive diplomacy through the greater involvement of women in mediation.

The Mediterranean may be troubled by numerous challenges, but it is also a sea of many opportunities. It is a market of 500 million consumers. It makes up 10 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP). That GDP grows at approximately 4.5 per cent annually. It is also where 20 per cent of maritime traffic and 30 per cent of the oil trade take place.

Will the Mediterranean region evolve into a meeting place of cultures that trade freely and cross-fertilize civilizations as it did once before? Or will it devolve into a region of terror, social despair and unrest? The answer very much depends upon the willingness and capacity of the international community to strongly confront all security challenges and simultaneously promote a pluralistic society that does not marginalize its youth, women or minorities. Those are the values that inspired the Charter of the United Nations. They are values that still ensure stability and development all across the world. In a region that connects Europe, Africa and Asia, the dividends of peace and security are huge and global. It is up to us to seize them.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Italian presidency for convening today's meeting. I thank you, Sir, for honouring the Council with your presence and for leading today's meeting.

The Mediterranean is in a strategically unique geographic location. It is the heart of the old world. It is the cradle and intersection of civilization. It has been a cultural beacon for the entire world. The Mediterranean has been a source of inspiration for peoples in the West and the East. It has been a bridge of communication between the West and the East. It has had a very unique cultural nature for the peoples of the Mediterranean that is based on diversity, tolerance and acceptance of others.

The crisis that we are witnessing in the Mediterranean has made the region a destination for foreign terrorist fighters. It is also a destination for returnees. Various terrorist organizations have found new ways to finance their terrorist activities, such as trafficking in petroleum, the destruction and trafficking in cultural artefacts and trafficking in persons, not to mention that some Governments are sponsoring terrorism in order to achieve political aims. They are providing terrorists with arms and funds. They also facilitate the transit of foreign terrorist fights. Combating terrorist challenges in the Mediterranean requires adopting a comprehensive approach. We also need to address the root causes of terrorism without any discrimination. In Iraq and Syria, we cannot focus on combating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) if its fighters can escape to Libya and the Sahel. That would not lead to combating terrorism. Rather, it would temporarily export the problem to a different region. We must combat the root causes of terrorism

and halt any support that is being given to terrorists. We must ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions, especially those relating to counter-terrorism and combating terrorist discourse. We must also ensure the implementation of relevant sanctions.

The Mediterranean intersects the Sahel region. That is why it is an important priority to ensure stability in the Sahel. It affects security and stability in the Mediterranean. Recently, we have seen that the security of the Sahel affects the security of the Mediterranean. We are witnessing the deterioration of the security situation in Libya and Mali, as well as the emergence of a security vacuum. It is hard to control the borders, especially in remote deserts. That has led to the creation of safe havens for terrorist organizations and organized crime networks.

At this juncture, I would like to emphasize the importance of the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force in combating such threats. The international community has a responsibility to support such an ambitious initiative. It is important to invest in the Joint Force. It will yield positive results, and such an investment would bear fruit.

It is also important to redouble efforts to implement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. It addresses the different challenges in the region from a comprehensive, holistic perspective that takes into account development, security and humanitarian dimensions, which are all interrelated and intertwined.

The Mediterranean suffers from water scarcity, especially in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Egypt believes that any serious approach to preventing crises cannot overlook water scarcity. We are witnessing increasing challenges to development that are related to environmental challenges. Therefore, water scarcity might be a reason for future wars. That is why it is incumbent upon us to work together to guarantee cooperation among different Mediterranean countries, so as to ensure development and the availability of water. That is why Egypt has signed bilateral and multilateral agreements with its neighbours and with other countries along the Nile River to ensure cooperation without causing harm to the environment and based on the principle of prior notification. In that way, countries can use the water in a reponsible manner.

Forced displacement is a direct result of the security and development challenges we are witnessing in the Mediterranean. Every year, millions of people escape from armed conflict, persecution, violence, terrorism, destitution and lack of food security, or they are escaping from the negative repercussions of climate change, natural disasters or other factors. Egypt believes it is important to adopt a holistic approach to address the root causes of forced displacement. Such an approach should focus on the development dimension in the countries of origin and in the host countries. Countries hosting refugees and migrants should make efforts to create more possibilities to welcome migrants and refugees. We cannot focus only on security solutions and close our borders. That runs contrary to the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. Egypt welcomes the efforts to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. In that way, countries can share the burden and the responsibilities. It will ultimately ensure the dignity of refugees and migrants.

In conclusion, the security approach in dealing with the problems in the Mediterranean has proven to be flawed. It is not conducive to restoring stability in the region. All parties must cooperate to combat the serious challenges and to address the root causes of the problems. We will overcome the challenges only through a genuine partnership based on capacity-building, and in a way that ensures stability in the Mediterranean. It will again make the Mediterranean a bridge for cultures, a bridge for development rather than being an open grave for ambitious young people who yearn for a better future. We cannot waste this human potential, which could completely change the landscape in the Mediterranean.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): It is really humbling to speak in this debate after the briefing, as always stimulating, by the Secretary-General, and now by the representatives of Italy and Egypt, two prominent Mediterranean countries. I want to thank you, Mr. President, as well as Italy, for initiating this discussion. As the Secretary-General clearly articulated, the security challenges in the Mediterranean region are the consequence of a confluence of factors at play in the immediate region and beyond.

Today, perhaps more than ever, the prosperity, stability and security of the peoples of the Mediterranean region and their neighbours are bound together by challenges that are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. They include conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, multidimensional poverty, climate change, forced displacement, organized crime and political instability. They are all transboundary in nature.

Overcoming them requires comprehensive approaches, regional perspectives and new partnerships at all levels.

This is not the type of discussion we normally have in the Security Council. Most days we meet to discuss one report, one country, one conflict. Yet it is becoming more and more evident that most of today's conflicts do not exist in a vacuum, within neatly defined borders. Likewise, we are also recognizing that modern conflicts are being driven not by one issue, but are a function of how different drivers — such as poverty, inequality and climate change, to name a few — interact with one another, and of the cumulative impact on individuals and societies.

It is clear, therefore, that our responses must follow a similar logic if we are to be effective. We must meet people's present needs based on their realities, while at the same time building resilience and investing in peaceful societies. Protecting human dignity and human rights is not only the surest way to prevent conflict, but also the foundation for building peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies. Today marks a welcome opportunity for the Council to zoom out and to take a broader perspective in order to discuss the root causes of security challenges in the Mediterranean region and how to address them. With that in mind, I want to make five brief points.

First, the most vulnerable within society are hit hardest when factors such as instability, underdevelopment and terrorism combine. It is essential that we continue to respond to the needs of those people in the short and medium term. That includes providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance, while at the same time building the resilience of individuals and communities against future shocks. It also means responding to the needs of those displaced as a result of poverty, conflict and insecurity, whose human rights must be upheld. We are particularly concerned about the current situation for refugees and migrants in parts of the Mediterranean region.

The Secretary-General has very often — and I think very rightly — spoken about the need to enhance the dignity of refugees. And he has often stressed the need to re-establish the integrity of the refugee-protection regime. All States must comply with the international human rights and refugee frameworks, particularly when it comes to detention. As I said in this Chamber only yesterday (see S/PV.8104), the situation in Libya is unacceptable in that regard, and further efforts are needed to ensure that international standards are met.

Secondly, our overarching focus must be on sustaining peace and preventing conflicts from emerging in the first place, or when they do, responding and resolving them quickly. Building on the sustaining peace agenda, the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole must be more effective in addressing conflicts in the Mediterranean and neighbouring regions early on, including by enhancing analysis, understanding of root causes and information sharing. The Council needs to draw upon more integrated analysis from the entire United Nations system in order for it to effectively assess, address, prevent and respond to conflicts and threats to international peace and security. I very much believe that the reform effort of the Secretary-General is meant precisely to improve that part of our work.

Thirdly, we need to expand our ability to manage long-term structural risks. That includes identifying and responding to the risks of instability and insecurity arising from the interaction of climate change and social, economic and political factors. The Council has already recognized the adverse effects of climate change on stability in the Lake Chad region, and called for adequate risk assessments, risk-management strategies and early-warning mechanisms. The Council must remain alert to those issues.

Fourthly, we know that many of the challenges facing the Mediterranean region originate in chronic underdevelopment, poverty, human rights violations and abuses, weak governance and a lack of opportunities. Hence, any long-term strategy needs to tackle those issues as a matter of priority. That includes addressing youth unemployment, social exclusion and inequality; respect for, and enjoyment of, human rights, including freedom of expression and of assembly; creating economic opportunities and a society built on the rule of law; and sustainable growth — just as you stressed, Mr. President. Above all, we need to see dedicated and determined implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, with its aim to leave no one behind, in itself constitutes a powerful tool for prevention. There are established links between gender inequality, political instability and underdevelopment. For that reason, the full and effective participation of women in decision-making at all levels is necessary in order to create stability and achieve sustainable development in the region.

Finally, in order to adopt an approach that is truly comprehensive, we need true partnerships among States, regional organizations and among people. We are very encouraged by the ever-increasing cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations and we support, as others have said, the Group or Five for the Sahel in all its efforts. The European Union has a key role to play in promoting security and prosperity inside and outside the borders of the Union. The upcoming African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan at the end of this month provides an important opportunity to strengthen crucial partnerships, with a timely focus on regional investment in youth.

Situated at the intersection of three continents, the Mediterranean has acted throughout history as a melting pot for culture, trade and people. The new types of complex security challenges facing the Mediterranean region are by no means unique. They are being replicated in different regions throughout the world. Responding will require us to work together, with the whole of the United Nations system supporting national and regional efforts with a range of flexible, integrated and innovative tools. Only by joint action can we respond to those overlapping challenges and ensure a better future for all.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting of the Security Council and for everything that Italy does so effectively in tackling the security challenges in the Mediterranean region. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on this complex set of issues before us.

It is all too often that we discuss the consequences of instability in the Council, and thpse consequences form some of the biggest threats that we all face: terrorism, modern slavery, disorderly mass migration and so on. I welcome this opportunity today to dig beneath the surface and to consider the root causes, as previous speakers have done.

In many cases, it is a Government's lack of respect for human rights — whether through inability or unwillingness — that leads to conflict, mass displacement and abuses. Terrorists and armed criminal groups have exploited the breakdown of State authority in parts of the Sahel and in Libya to exploit people. They use their profits from smuggling, human trafficking and modern slavery to fuel even more instability, which in turn damages the economic opportunities that Governments should be offering their citizens. That then further fuels displacement, terrorism and modern slavery. Today I want to set out what the United Kingdom is doing to address those root causes.

First of all, we are totally committed to the Secretary-General's agenda of preventing conflict. We are substantially increasing our investments in fragile States to strengthen their resilience; we have implemented new early-warning and early action systems that help prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict. And we will continue to help the United Nations to strengthen its conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding capacity.

The United Kingdom is proud to be the largest donor to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and, in the Security Council, as penholder on Libya, we are at the forefront of international efforts to help Libya overcome the political and security challenges that it faces. As we discussed yesterday (see S/PV.8104), an inclusive political deal negotiated within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement is the best way of stabilizing Libya and tackling the criminal networks that make it a transit route for illegal migration. It is also the best way of developing Libya's huge economic potential.

We recognize that we need to reduce the space in which terrorists and people traffickers thrive across the region. It is those groups that too often also cause, or exploit, instability and conflict. We therefore encourage all Member States to work with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Security Council-mandated Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate to develop their capabilities to counter terrorism and to prevent violent extremism.

Secondly, the United Kingdom recognizes that, when crises become protracted, refugees who have no choice but to flee their homes cannot return. It is therefore vital that education and employment opportunities and support be available to displaced people and to the communities that host them. We are proud to give 0.7 per cent of our gross national income to development. Over half of all the spending of the Department for International Development is to fragile States and regions. In addition, we have helped to secure new World Bank funding for countries that host refugees. At the London conference on Syria in 2016, the United Kingdom pioneered, and secured agreement for, historic compacts between Governments of the

region and the international community to deliver education, create jobs and provide opportunities for refugees and local people.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is stepping up its efforts to combat the criminal networks that profit from modern slavery: for instance, we are developing an ambitious programme in Nigeria, from where so many migrants across the Mediterranean flow. We all have a role to play to rid the world of this terrible scourge. Let us all invest in livelihoods and development in source countries, and let us all work with border authorities and intelligence agencies to tackle human trafficking and smuggling networks.

In conclusion, our ultimate goal is a well-governed, stable region where human rights are respected. That will ensure we have a stronger platform to fight international terrorism, to end modern slavery and to achieve safe and well-managed migration, bringing value to the destination country and country of origin while also ensuring the safety of those travelling. Given the scale of the challenges ahead, we owe it to all involved to work together and address all of those issues simultaneously.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): It is s pleasure to see you, Sir, once again presiding over the Security Council. The security challenges in the Mediterranean have many dimensions, as they do not negatively affect only countries in the region but also have severe implications for global peace and security. It is therefore timely and necessary to think collectively about how best to tackle these threats. I thank you again, Mr. Minister, for bringing such an important issue to the attention of the Security Council. We also thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing.

Today's discussion can be seen as continuation of our deliberations yesterday (see S/PV.8104) on the situation in Libya. We believe that the country remains an important element for the stability of neighbouring States, North Africa and the Sahel. It is therefore even more regrettable that the current crisis in Libya shows no signs of abating. People live under a constant threat of death or injury from fighting among various armed groups. Hundreds have been killed or tortured. And thousands have been displaced. The humanitarian and economic situation continues to deteriorate rapidly. More and more Libyans require international assistance. The Libyan crisis has opened up a wide range of opportunities to exploit the security and institutional vacuum. It has enabled local terrorist groups and criminal networks to gain ideological influence and military strength not only in Libya, but in the wider region.

It should be mentioned that the terrorist threat is not something new to the countries of the South-East Mediterranean and the neighbouring Sahel. Major contingents of foreign terrorist fighters who joined the ranks of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Al-Qaida and their affiliates in Iraq and Syria originated from those particular regions. Now, in view of the recent significant setbacks and loss of territory by respective terrorist organizations in the Middle East, countries in North Africa have to face the inflow of both those who are returning and those who are relocating. Their presence will, without a doubt, fuel only sectarianism and increase the complexity and duration of conflicts.

The other side of the problem is the possible abuse of asylum systems by terrorists while huge waves of migrants arrive from conflict zones, seeking shelter. There is a growing concern about the possible creation of sleeper cells in different parts of North Africa and Europe, which has to be duly addressed.

In order to combat potential terrorism outbreaks and its spread to new regions, the international community may need to elaborate additional measures to those set established in resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2322 (2016), which should address terrorists' modus operandi, inter alia, in a number of ways.

First, we should ensure broader criminalization of foreign terrorist fighters and develop bilateral and international exchange of evidence of their crimes, so that terrorists can be apprehended at the earliest stage possible and face justice.

Secondly, we should ensure swift and unimpeded sharing of information between States, especially of terrorist biometric data, and universalize the use of advanced passenger information and INTERPOL databases.

Thirdly, we should establish effective cross-border cooperation between immigration, law-enforcement and judicial authorities.

Fourthly, we should conduct risk assessments and identify the most vulnerable border stretches in order to strengthen respective controls.

And, fifthly, we should further cut off the sources of financing for terrorism, especially combating extortion activities and kidnapping for ransom, as well as disrupting terrorists' cooperation with transnational organized crime groups involved in smuggling and the trafficking in human beings and weapons.

We also believe that, without political or economic opportunities, particularly for youth, there is a risk that the North Africa and sub-Saharan regions will remain impoverished and ungoverned zones where terrorists and criminals will find a safe haven and a suitable environment for illegal trafficking in persons and arms, as well as other unlawful activities.

Syria remains another burning hotbed of tension in the Mediterranean, poisoning the surrounding region and the wider security environment. The uncountable waves of refugees that fled Syria, seeking salvation from the brutal tyranny and inhumane conditions, arrived in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and many European Union States, thereby creating additional risks for the socioeconomic and security situation in those countries.

Six years of the conflict have passed and what do we see? If current trends persist in Syria, there is a chance that one side will claim a military victory and the overall situation will be akin to that of 2011. However, this time it will be compounded by a traumatized society affected by years of war and a deepening sectarian divide, with neither national reconciliation nor the root causes of the crisis having been addressed. Under such circumstances, any victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in Syria will provide only temporary relief, with a door remaining open for a new ISIS-like crisis to emerge. Therefore, we continue to believe that there should be a longer-term blueprint for Syria, one that is firmly based on a commitment to a negotiated political settlement and a clear understanding of what will be done next. In the absence of such a blueprint, the situation in the country will continue to pose a long-term risk for the entire Mediterranean region.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that, if we want to achieve sustainable peace and stability in the Mediterranean, more investments have to be made in the socioeconomic development of the countries in need. Without functioning Government structures, the provision of most essential social services, working law enforcement and judicial organs, and the active State support for local businesses and trade initiatives, the vulnerable communities in conflict-affected countries will remain an easy target for terrorists and criminals. Therefore, initiatives to fight terrorism, bring about economic development and ensure respect for human rights — including the active promotion and protection of the rights of women and children — must go hand in hand and complement each other.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a true honour to see you, Mr. President, presiding over this meeting. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing, and we take this opportunity to once again commend the way in which Italy is conducting its presidency of the Security Council this month.

The challenges affecting security in the Mediterranean have root causes in the conflicts currently taking place in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the collateral effect that has been generated in the Sahel region. That in turn has translated into the difficulty of States embroiled in internal conflicts to guarantee the security of their own citizens and establish effective measures to strengthen their internal order.

Regrettably, one of the dimensions of this crisis, as we have heard during this meeting, is reflected in the alarming number of migrants and refugees who have died in the Mediterranean Sea — amounting to nearly 3,000 fatalities in 2017 alone. That is a figure that, according to the report of 13 November of the International Organization for Migration, represents more than half of the worldwide fatalities linked to migrants and people seeking refuge. Furthermore, the trafficking in migrants and refugees, subjecting them to slavery, their degrading treatment and the many cases of sexual exploitation, are other examples of the serious effects of this crisis, evidencing the existence and interconnections of terrorist organizations and networks of transnational criminal organizations. Such groups take advantage of the fragile security and control bodies of the States affected by internal conflicts and exploit people's need to safeguard their lives and their families lives by fleeing the conflicts in their places of origin. That generates resources and finances for the criminal organizations and exacerbates the crisis in the region.

In that context, we appreciate the significant efforts made by the agencies of the United Nations

and the various international cooperation bodies to alleviate the situation of the migrants and refugees who seek to escape conflicts by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. We are also grateful for the State and regional efforts that are being implemented in compliance with resolutions 2240 (2015), 2312 (2016) and 2380 (2017) to combat the crime of trafficking in persons, mainly off the Libyan coast.

We call on all States and the international community to make the greatest possible efforts to prevent and put an end to the proliferation of human trafficking networks operating in the Mediterranean Sea by developing and strengthening the institutional capacities of the countries of transit and origin of those victims. In that regard, Bolivia proposed in June, during the World Peoples' Conference, the concept of "universal citizenship", with the aim of reducing the barriers that prevent refugees from escaping war, armed conflicts or human trafficking. We believe that that proposal constitutes a useful tool to deal with the crisis that is currently occupying the attention of the international community.

The issue of security in North Africa is an important element to take into account when analysing the situation in the Mediterranean according to what was reported on Friday, 10 November in the joint meeting of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), concerning the Sudan, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), concerning Libya, and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan. The reports mentioned the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries operating in the region who are moving without much difficulty between the countries that are embroiled in internal conflicts and are actively involved in taking up arms and undermining all efforts to achieve a political and peaceful solution to those conflicts.

An example of the related effects of the crises in the region was reflected in the final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) submitted in 2015, which established that weapons from Libya considerably strengthened the military capacity of the terrorist groups that operate in the Sahel subregion and are currently used to perpetrate attacks against the national security forces, as well as civilians and members of the United Nations peacekeeping missions in the field.

It is evident that Government vacuums, the weakening of order and security forces and the absence of border controls have been, and continue to be, elements that allow the proliferation of terrorist groups and irregular combatants, who find the spaces to commit acts of destabilization, in addition to perpetrating crimes and violations of human rights, which may constitute crimes against humanity.

Finally, we believe that those weaknesses and challenges can be addressed if the parties to the various conflicts commit to engage in sustained dialogue to resolve their differences, opting to cease hostilities and, above all, seeking to strengthen the organic structures of the security forces, generating confidence in State institutions and reinforcing the presence and control of States on their borders. In that regard, the efforts of the Council and the international community should focus on paving the way to promote and strengthen peaceful means of conflict resolution. To that end, we believe that the role of the various missions of the United Nations established on the ground to facilitate that work is fundamental.

We reiterate that, to a large extent, the challenges that today affect security in the Mediterranean are the direct and concrete result of the application of regime-change policies, interventionism and interference in the internal affairs of other States, which does nothing more than lead to millions of victims, displaced persons and fatalities.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): To begin, I would like to thank the President — His Excellency Mr. Angelino Alfano — for convening this meeting on such an important topic. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing.

The Mediterranean region, which is adjacent to three continents, has historically enjoyed great cultural diversity as the birthplace and crossroads of many civilizations. At the same time, its location makes it particularly vulnerable to the spillover effects of conflict. Today the Mediterranean region is experiencing various challenges in addition to conflict, including climate change, famine, terrorism, violent extremism, transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, and an unprecedented volume of migration. Those challenges are complex, intertwined threats to peace and security in the region that are exacerbating or prolonging existing conflicts. Against that backdrop, we would like to share a few

perspectives on how to more effectively address those complex, interlinked threats to peace and security in the Mediterranean.

First, we need to grapple with complex, multifactoral challenges to international peace and security through a more comprehensive and integrated approach. In particular, we would like to emphasize the perspective of the peace and security, development and humanitarian nexus. It is clear that complex driving factors to conflict cannot be dealt with from a fragmented perspective. In that regard, it is important to implement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which addresses the multidimensional and interlinked challenges facing the Sahel region. Those challenges are among the major factors underlying the surging movement of people through the Mediterranean.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's leadership to strengthen the United Nations work in the Sahel by establishing a steering committee for the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Japan has been a strong supporter of flagship projects in that regard. We have provided support for border control, as well as for countermeasures against the radicalization of youth and activities to raise awareness of civic rights. Those assistance projects aim to strengthen border control capacity and prevent young people from turning to violent extremism, and thereby stabilize the region.

Secondly, efforts to sustain peace in the region cannot succeed without the States' ownership. In that regard, we would like to commend the ongoing political process in Libya, which is being led by the Libyan people themselves, and express our ongoing support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his role to facilitate that process. The Council should continue to robustly support efforts such as the Libyan political process, conducted with the ownership of the affected countries themselves.

In addition, the role played by regional organizations around the Mediterranean — which include the League of Arab States, the European Union and the African Union — cannot be overemphasized. We believe that the strengthened partnership and better coordination between the United Nations, the Security Council and regional organizations are essential to comprehensively address complex, regional challenges.

Thirdly, we believe that the human security approach could serve as a useful tool in dealing with the complex, interlinked threats to peace and security in the region. Human security seeks to protect and empower every individual; it necessarily addresses multiple challenges at once, including those that are most destabilizing to the Mediterranean region, such as food and water insecurity, migration, internally displaced persons and health care.

I would like to conclude by thanking once again the presidency of Italy for organizing this holistic and thematic meeting of the Security Council. It is important for the Council to seek better ways to address today's complex, multifactoral challenges to international peace and security. During our presidency of the Council next month, we would like to continue relevant discussions, building upon today's discussions.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President — Foreign Minister Alfano — for presiding over this important discussion. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing this afternoon.

Several members have already spoken about many of the specific challenges countries around the Mediterranean face. Terrorism, illicit smuggling, migration and development are all urgent issues that deserve our full attention. But let us step back for a moment. When we look at the Mediterranean, we can see that many of those challenges originate in conflicts in two places, that is, Syria and Libya. Both of those conflicts began when ordinary people demanded respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Attempts by the Al-Assad and Al-Qadhafi regimes to suppress those demands by force created much of the instability we are now grappling with today. The lesson is simple: the question of security in the Mediterranean is really a question of human dignity. When we support respect for human dignity and the rule of law, we can achieve lasting stability. However, ignoring such demands for human rights can sow the seeds of future conflict.

In Syria, Al-Assad's brutality gave the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and Al-Qaida a window of opportunity. As the Al-Assad regime rounded up, tortured and executed thousands of people, ISIS and Al-Qaida's violent ideology gained new traction. As Al-Assad's regime literally starved its people and bombed hospitals and schools, the migration exodus began. As long as the Al-Assad regime remains in power, the potential for instability and extremism will remain.

In Libya, decades of misrule by Al-Qadhafi left the country with extremely weak institutions. When the revolution came, those institutions crumbled. Libya became a place where ISIS was able to set up an outpost and where illegal activity, such as trafficking in people and arms, could thrive as well. As with Syria, the Libyan people continue to pay a steep price. It is now time for all Libyans to support and engage constructively in the political process facilitated by the United Nations to achieve national reconciliation, end the conflict and build unified national governance and security institutions.

Today we are facing the consequences of those decades of tyranny. Oppression at home in Syria and Libya created threats to international peace and security. The answer to security challenges in the Mediterranean must therefore not be a misguided attempt to recreate failed political structures of the past; instead, we have to do better. All of us in the Council must work, in word and in deed, to support something different. We need political solutions to conflicts in Libya and Syria that empower people and that create strong representative institutions over the long run. That goal has to be what guides us in responding to the immediate challenges of the present. Of course, there is no shortage of immediate threats to confront. None is more pressing than defeating ISIS and Al-Qaida.

The United States continues to lead, with important successes against ISIS in Syria. But we have to stay vigilant. Fighters on the run in Syria threaten to slip across borders as they try to return home or go to third countries. All Member States will need to increase their defences against foreign terrorist fighters, in line with the terms of resolution 2178 (2014). In Libya, we partnered with the Government of National Accord and its aligned forces as they expelled ISIS from Sirte, which was once the principal stronghold of ISIS outside Iraq and Syria. Yesterday, we heard from Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on his mediation efforts (see S/PV.8104). The international community must help Special Representative Salamé and the Libyan parties advance the country's political process, which is the only viable way to stabilize Libya and unify national security forces against the real threat, that is, ISIS. Armed civil conflict among Libyans will only destabilize the country and play into ISIS's hands.

Of course, civilians face dire risks every day from the fighting in Syria and Libya, too. Just this week, air strikes reportedly killed more than 50 civilians in a market in northern Syria. These were the latest incidents in the regime's long track record of flagrant disregard for the lives and welfare of the Syrian people. The Al-Assad regime's barbaric acts continue to play right into the hands of terrorist groups and undermine stability across the region.

We are also seeing new risks for civilians in Libya. Just a few weeks ago, more than a dozen people were killed and many more injured in an air strike in the city of Derna, and its people desperately need immediate and unhindered humanitarian access. Last month 36 bodies were found in a mass grave not far from Benghazi. The United States strongly condemns those incidents. As Mr. Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, stated yesterday (see S/PV.8104), there are also concerns that a number of the fighters who died last week in the Warshefana area, in western Libya, were killed in a manner that violates international law. Those responsible must now be held accountable in order to prevent such atrocities from happening in the future, and all sides must avoid further escalation.

Finally, the United States agrees with many others in the Council about the importance of combating trafficking in persons and illicit smuggling. Transnational criminal organizations are responsible for so much of that illegal activity, and they are preying on the defenceless. We continue to hear sickening reports from victims inside Libya, including migrants who have been raped, sold into prostitution or subjected to forced labour. It is no surprise that those same criminal gangs have no concern for the lives of migrants at sea, where more than 2,900 people have died this year in the Mediterranean alone.

We recognize the important work of the European Union's Operation Sophia, led by Italy, in combating smuggling and rescuing thousands of lives at sea, but the criminals are branching out, including through the illegal smuggling of Libyan oil and petroleum products. That is why it was important that the Council designated for sanctions two ships involved in the illegal petroleum trade earlier this year, and we should use all the tools we have to disrupt those criminal networks. But we all have to remember where so many of the challenges began. They began with regimes that did not respect the dignity and rights of their peoples. Stability in the Mediterranean is not just about addressing all of the

short-term challenges around us; it is about learning from the recent past. It is about investing in real institutions that protect people's rights. It is about speaking up as a Security Council when we see Governments moving in the wrong direction. It is about remembering that when people are oppressed, the consequences go far beyond the borders of any one country, and that is what we must act on.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Italian delegation for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting. In our view, its format makes it possible to consider the challenges and threats to global peace and security from a new perspective, including through the prism of the situation in the Mediterranean region. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative report on the subject.

The Mediterranean region has clearly encountered a slew of problems spawned by crisis situations in countries around it as well as beyond it. The terrorist threat continues to grow and the scale and scope of transnational organized crime is continually expanding, owing in part to its close ties to terrorist activity. The waves of migrants attempting to leave their homes to seek a better future in a new homeland are not diminishing. However, it would be wrong to imply that such worrying trends are linked exclusively to the region around the Mediterranean Sea. Their negative impact is being felt around the world. Our planet has become so interdependent that a crisis in one spot on the globe can have a chain reaction far beyond its borders. Regrettably, in this era of globalization, we cannot defend ourselves from this either by building walls or deploying military forces. In this situation, there is only one possible way for the international community to respond to these threats. We must unite our efforts, based on cooperation through honest partnerships, with the aim of resolving the situations of conflict in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel-Saharan region — which have become catalysts for the wave of destabilization in the Mediterranean — as well as a factor of waging an uncompromising fight against the threat of terrorism. We have long called for this.

One of the stated aims of today's briefing is to consider the root causes of the multifaceted threats to security in the Mediterranean. We believe that, overall, this approach is worth supporting. From the very beginning of the so-called Arab spring, which triggered a series of destructive processes in the Middle East and North Africa, Russia has repeatedly suggested that the Security Council should conduct a substantive analysis of what occurred and draw lessons from it for the future. However, few have made use of that sad but valuable experience. Meanwhile, the growing instability in the region has been skilfully exploited by extremists and terrorist groups. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, the African cells of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and others have hastened to fill the power vacuum that external forces helped to create.

We share the concerns about the unprecedented harm they continue to do to cultural heritage sites, using profits from their trade in historically and culturally valuable objects to finance terrorism's requirements. We expect that this problem, and the issue of human trafficking, will be considered in more detail in separate Security Council meetings this month.

Just yesterday we discussed the situation in Libya (see S/PV.8104), where the lack of stability is a key piece in the region's jigsaw puzzle of security. We heard worrying assessments of the political situation, and many expressed their concerns about the slow implementation of Special Representative Salamé's action plan. Yet almost no one mentioned the original causes of the crisis in Libya. The representative of Bolivia alone reminded us — and we thank him for it — that they are to be found in the military intervention that the NATO countries undertook in 2011 in order to change a regime that they did not like, in violation of international law. The result was that the radical groups that had been used not long before to oust Mr. Al-Qadhafi gained access to arsenals, a danger that had warned about well in advance. That in turn foreordained the further evolution of the situation far beyond the borders of Libya, primarily in the Sahel-Saharan region and the Mediterranean.

It would be wrong to delude ourselves that terrorists can be used for achieving political goals such as effecting regime change in Tripoli, Damascus or anywhere else, and then to hope that they will sign up for deradicalization classes and assimilate peacefully into civil society. They will accept financial, military and other assistance, of course, but they will turn their backs on their sponsors as soon as they consider it necessary. We have already seen that with Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and we will see it again. It is simply wrong to close one's eyes to manifestations of radicalization in such situations, let alone condone them.

We do not share the belief that human rights violations are the primary cause of conflict and that action in support of human rights is the key to preventing conflict. Indeed, practice has shown that the reverse is true. Only resolving conflicts can lead to improvements in human rights situations. Reckless intervention, including under the banner of protecting human rights, can lead to a collapse of State authority, humanitarian disasters, civil wars and surges in terrorism, and thereby produce massive flows of forcibly displaced people. We believe that States that are actively involved in such interventions should acknowledge that it is they who have primary responsibility for assisting the refugees and internally displaced persons who have fallen victim to their actions.

We share the concerns about the deaths of refugees and migrants who choose dangerous paths in their quest for a better life, fleeing terrorist threats, persecution, conflict, instability and poverty. It is important to understand that the long-term solution to the problem lies in finding political settlements in the refugees' countries of origin. Millions of people, and entire nations, are in need of peace, stability and confidence in the future. The ultimately determining way to significantly reduce the refugee problem is to establish lasting peace in Syria, Libya and other countries in the grip of conflict.

It is essential to comprehensively combat criminal organizations that are smuggling people, improve and strengthen mechanisms to manage migration processes and increase the international community's cooperation on this issue. We must also expand socioeconomic development assistance to countries of origin, and it is as important as ever to combat displays of racism and xenophobia towards refugees and migrants.

The obvious fact remains that in order to ensure security, development and stability in a region, it is essential to strengthen State institutions, provide for systemic economic and social development and universal respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as taking measures to combat terrorism. It will be essential to improve the performance of existing mechanisms. For example, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel has not yet been used to its full potential. If the response to the threats in the Mediterranean is not a truly collective one, waves of instability will continue to spread from crisis areas. It is essential to stop double-dealing and courting radicals. We are ready to cooperate openly with all of our partners in the interests of preventing the destructive evolution of events in the Mediterranean region. Russia's policy is transparent. We have no hidden agenda.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As we were yesterday, the Senegalese delegation is pleased to see you presiding over today's debate on security challenges in the Mediterranean, Mr. President.

For a change, I will begin by reading out a press statement issued today by the Government of Senegal.

> "The Government of the Republic of Senegal expresses its profound indignation upon learning of the sale on Libyan territory of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The Government of the Republic of Senegal vigorously denounces and condemns in the strongest terms such human trafficking, which is a serious outrage to the conscience of humankind. Senegal urges the competent Libyan authorities, as well as the African Union and the United Nations, to launch a prompt investigation into this practice of a different era in order to do everything possible to put an end to it."

As a natural link between Africa, Europe and Asia, the Mediterranean basin has over the years become a place where complex internal and external factors — human, cultural, socioeconomic and recently, owing to climate change, environmental — are intertwined. The Mediterranean is also a hotbed of passions and tensions that have shaped diverse itineraries and trajectories and directions for coastal countries and peoples.

The threats to the stability of the Mediterranean region are therefore numerous and, to varying degrees, present in all its countries, with roots that extend as far as the Sahel-Saharan belt. In particular, North Africa is directly affected, especially since the upheavals in the Arab world that have destabilized Libya, among other countries. The consequences of the disruption of Libya are being felt today throughout the Sahel and well beyond, including, of course, the Mediterranean region, thanks to the double effect of the spillover of weapons to the Sahel, which is pushing migrants towards Europe.

The Sahel region, which is feeling the full impact of the consequences of the situation in Libya, is now plagued by insecurity, trafficking of all kinds, terrorism and violent extremism, whose consequences include attacks, kidnappings and summary executions of unprecedented violence, perpetrated by armed groups — mainly criminal, but also terrorist — that

continue to spread terror within communities. We know that these groups take advantage of loopholes in international legal systems and flaws in national and international financial systems to raise funds, including through the illicit sale of oil, kidnappings for ransoms, human and arms trafficking, looting, the sale of cultural property and even of protected animal and plant species. For now, violent extremism seems to be taking permanent root in the Sahel and throughout the Mediterranean region.

If we are to take up the challenge of insecurity in the Sahel and the Mediterranean, we believe we must take a holistic approach that will bring together the security, humanitarian, development and environmental aspects, since it is clear that only a comprehensive response and united efforts will enable us to overcome the various threats that continue to undermine the security and stability of the Mediterranean and the Sahel. In that connection, the United Nations must continue to play its central role in supporting ongoing regional efforts in both regions.

With regard to Libya, the delegation of Senegal would like to insist, as it did at yesterday's briefing in this Chamber (see S/PV.8104), on the importance of addressing the issue within the overall framework of the search for a political solution to the Libyan crisis through inclusive dialogue, as part of a Libyan-led process, through the good offices of the United Nations, particularly Mr. Salamé. We firmly believe that the restoration of peace and stability in Libya is essential to all neighbouring countries and regions, including in the Mediterranean region.

In general, the solutions to the challenges facing most of the States of the Mediterranean could be summarized as follows. We must prioritize political approaches in the search for solutions to crises; encourage and promote better subregional and cross-regional cooperation and integration; fight together against terrorist movements, organized transnational criminal networks and violent extremism; and reduce the fragility of States and their economies by mitigating the effects of climate change.

Syria, a country in the Mediterranean basin that is enduring a deep political crisis, is undoubtedly an amalgam of these various challenges, with the presence of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, foreign terrorist fighters, mass movements of displaced persons and refugees not only to neighbouring countries but also to Europe, as well as the looting and trafficking of cultural property. With the decline of the Islamic State, now on the defensive in Syria and in Iraq thanks to the efforts of various stakeholders, my delegation reaffirms its belief in the urgent need for a political solution to the Syrian dispute on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), with a view to addressing the humanitarian challenges and ensuring accountability for the multiple alleged crimes, including the use of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapons.

My delegation has not forgotten the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is as old as the Organization itself, and calls on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to redouble its efforts so that, like the Israelis, who enjoy a democratic and prosperous State, the Palestinians can fulfil their legitimate aspirations to obtaining a sovereign and viable State within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Equally concerning is the situation in Lebanon, where the resignation of the Prime Minister is generating institutional instability.

We must also acknowledge that the lack of cooperation and shared vision among the various regions affected by the global security situation in the Mediterranean basin complicates the search for solutions. With regard to the Mediterranean and as way forward, the Senegalese delegation proposes reflecting on the outcome document (General Assembly resolution 71/312), entitled "Our ocean, our future: call for action", which, last July, authorized the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by joining others in thanking the Italian presidency for organizing this timely briefing on the security challenges in the Mediterranean region. I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and sharing his thoughts on how to address such pressing challenges.

In this briefing, although there have been references to issues that do not belong here, we prefer to stick to matters that are relevant to the topic at hand. In our view, attempts to exercise a monopoly on any area of discussion does not contribute to peace. Ethiopia has always been committed to a win-win outcome in all engagements with its partners.

Armed conflicts in the Mediterranean region continue to create space for terrorist organizations and violent extremist groups within which to operate. They have also created favourable conditions for organized criminal groups engaged in trafficking in persons and smuggling. Those trends have caused unspeakable suffering for civilian populations, thereby resulting in forced displacement in the Sahel, Middle East and North Africa, as well as the large-scale secondary movement of people using the Mediterranean route. The large-scale secondary movement coupled with the entrenchment of organized transnational criminal groups continues to pose serious challenges to maintaining peace and security in the Mediterranean region, particularly in front-line countries, such as Italy and Greece.

Restrictions on mobility are also among the challenges facing the Mediterranean region, particularly in the light of increased suffering faced by people on the move, including tragic deaths, extortion, slavery and sexual and gender-based violence, as well as other serious human rights abuses at the hands of terrorist groups and trafficking and smuggling networks. In our view, those serious challenges require a comprehensive and coordinated approach that could be based on the following three pillars.

First, it is vital to intensify all efforts to address the root causes of conflicts, as well as respond to challenges that might have resulted from the vacuum caused by them, such as transnational organized crimes, terrorism and violent extremism. The role of the Security Council in resolving the root causes of conflict and responding to challenges posed by terrorists and violent extremist groups to the maintenance of peace and security and countries affected by armed conflict continues to be critical. In that regard, the Council should continue to work towards finding a political solution to conflicts, and use all the available tools at its disposal to that end. Enhanced cooperation and coordination with the African Union and subregional organizations would also complement the Security Council's efforts in that area. Our united efforts in addressing the root causes of conflict will enable us to establish favourable conditions for the sustainable, voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees to their countries of origin in safety, and prevent further secondary movements to Europe.

Secondly, in countries emerging from conflict or in post-conflict situations, justice and security institutions struggle to manage the wider socioeconomic and political challenges inherent to recovery processes. It is important to redouble our efforts in supporting countries emerging from conflicts in the Sahel, particularly with regard to their institutions and efforts to sustain peace and development.

Thirdly, serious protection challenges concerning the humanitarian situation caused by armed conflicts and terrorism in north-eastern Nigeria, Libya, Syria and Mali, among others, and the lack of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons from those countries continue to be the primary cause of secondary movement via the Mediterranean. For instance, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has indicated that refugees and migrants continued to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean sea during the first half of 2017. Although I commend the generosity of countries of the Mediterranean region that continue to open their borders to refugees, I would like to underscore the importance of facilitating regular, safe, accessible and orderly mobility, particularly through expanded resettlement opportunities, and visitor, family reunification, work, resident and student visas, as well as other temporary protection schemes. I would also like to re-emphasize the need to redouble our support for refugees response plans in first countries of asylum to respond to their protection needs.

In conclusion, I would like to end my statement by affirming our commitment to working in a coordinated manner with all relevant actors to address the root causes of the peace and security challenges in the Mediterranean region, while encouraging countries in and beyond the region to continue their generosity directed towards refugees seeking international protection.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank the Italian presidency and you, Mr. Minister, for convening this meeting and highlighting the security challenges that the Mediterranean faces today. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his comprehensive briefing.

The security environment in the Mediterranean region has indeed changed dramatically in recent years. The conflicts, threats and unprecedented humanitarian crises in North and West Africa, the Middle East and the Sahel have deeply impacted stability in Europe as a result of contemporary security challenges. Those can be categorized as unconventional terrorism, irregular migration and organized crime involving arms, drugs

and trafficking in persons, all of which generate an atmosphere of fear, distrust and intense hostilities. They, in turn, further negatively affect the social and political structure of European society and regional stability, as well as international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned about the growing migration flow through the Mediterranean to Europe, primarily through Libya, which has become the largest illegal channel for the transit of migrants and refugees. Instability, a fragile and volatile security situation, and a lack of unity within Libya create a breeding ground in which human traffickers are able to actively operate in the country. Hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees in Libya suffer abuses and detention in inhuman conditions.

Kazakhstan therefore welcomed the adoption of resolution 2380 (2017) on 5 October, extending for another year the mandate of the European Union (EU) military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean and conferring upon it the charge of combating smuggling and human trafficking on the high seas off the coast of Libya. More importantly, my delegation also urges for the immediate and strict implementation by all Member States of its various provisions.

We commend the outcome of the annual Mediterranean Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, held in Palermo last month under the Italian chairmanship of the OSCE-Mediterranean Contact Group, which focused on the large movements of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean. The results of this significant meeting have a direct bearing on the necessary steps that need to be taken.

Tackling the challenges of migration is of common interest to all European States and the rest of the world. It is not only a humanitarian issue, but also a political and a security problem, which could be solved through close partnership among the United Nations and the EU, NATO, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as countries of origin and transit. The rights of refugees and migrants must be protected, including through their active engagement in the social life of their host countries and through their integration within European society, so that people build a future in their new home. This comprehensive development response helps drive long-term economic growth, as well as jobs and opportunities for potential economic migrants.

The role of the EU remains vital to support affected countries by implementing the mandates of the EU Trust Fund, the Joint Communication on the Central Mediterranean route, and the Malta Declaration. However, global challenges can only be effectively addressed by the involvement of the international community as a whole, working together in a balanced and human rights-compliant way. The key principle of such global support is balancing non-interference in the internal affairs of States with the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building for strengthening State institutions.

Fragile Member States must be helped to protect their citizens through bilateral and multilateral support for the rule of law, good governance and security-sector reform, and by promoting human rights and investing in development, so as to create political, economic and social stability. Understanding the root causes of displacement, together with strengthening the security-development nexus, is necessary for long-term development, for which a regional approach consistent with the "One UN" strategy would be most effective. Such an approach cannot bear fruit without investing in poverty reduction, education, job creation and basic services.

Kazakhstan is strongly committed to reaching concrete outcomes on the issue of migrants and refugees, working together with the United Nations as well as other Member States, based on the fundamental principles of human dignity, justice and freedom. We firmly believe that through our joint efforts we can make the Mediterranean a region of new opportunities and an oasis of global prosperity and stability.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China appreciates Italy's initiative in holding a public meeting on the security challenges in the Mediterranean. We welcome Foreign Minister Alfano's presence in the Chamber today and thank him for presiding over today's meeting. The statement by Secretary-General Guterres has provided excellent context for our discussion, for which China is grateful.

The Mediterranean is a region where Asia, Africa and Europe meet. In recent years, the situation in Libya, Syria and the Sahel region has been deteriorating. The hotspot issues have continuously been getting worse. Terrorist forces have been rampant and spreading. The problem of the illegal transfer of arms is serious. The regional situation is volatile and unstable, seriously

affecting the development of countries of the region and their peoples' lives. Many countries are faced with multiple challenges, such as unbalanced development, intercommunal conflict, massive flows of refugees and migrants, and serious cross-border organized crimes, inter alia.

The fates of the countries and peoples in the Mediterranean are interwoven, and the spillover impacts of the regional situation on the surrounding larger region cannot be underestimated. Expeditiously improving the situation in the region and finding a way to achieve regional stability, prevent new conflicts and build sustainable peace and development will require the joint efforts of the international community. China would like to emphasize the following points.

First, regional hotspot issues should be the focus, and the process of political settlement should be accelerated. Libya's neighbouring countries, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the European Union should step up their efforts to promote peace talks in support of the action plans and initiatives on the political settlement of the Libyan issue, so as to achieve reconciliation, stability and development in Libya at an early date. The international community should remain united and push the Syrian parties to reach an agreement acceptable to all parties as soon as possible through the Geneva peace talks. Bearing in mind the specific context in the Sahel region, the international community should take comprehensive measures to help cool down the hotspot issues in a relevant way and achieve overall peace and stability in that region. The international community should not neglect the long-standing Palestinian issue. Unless we resolve that issue at the root of the Middle East question, it will be difficult to truly achieve regional stability.

Secondly, we should strengthen international and regional efforts, as well as coordination and cooperation with the countries concerned, and jointly meet our security challenges. The United Nations has a central role to play in international affairs in terms of coordinating efforts in preventive diplomacy, development assistance, good offices in mediation and post-conflict reconstruction. Regional organizations should also play a constructive role, giving greater assistance to countries of the region in conflict resolution and development, enhancing capacity-building and achieving regional stability, while paying attention in this process to safeguarding the sovereignty of the countries concerned, respecting their views and focusing on their needs. At the same time, the coordination of country and regional strategies should be strengthened to encourage synergies.

Thirdly, we should resolutely fight terrorism and appropriately address the refugee and migrant issue. Terrorism is the public enemy of all humankind. It seriously undermines the security and stability of the region. The international community should unite in its fight against terrorism and comprehensively use the various means available to it to strengthen border control and law enforcement cooperation in the Mediterranean region and adjacent regions, cut off the financing of terrorists and their supply of arms, halt the spread of terrorist ideologies and step up the efforts aimed at preventing the spillover and return of foreign terrorist fighters.

In dealing with the issue of refugees and migrants, it is necessary to strengthen support for countries receiving refugees, eliminate xenophobia and discrimination against them, and address the root causes of social instability and development imbalance. By supporting the countries of origin and transit, we can create conditions for the return of refugees and promote the sustainable development in the countries of origin. China appreciates the efforts of Italy, Lebanon and Jordan and others in their response to the refugee crisis in the region.

Fourthly, we should promote inclusive, balanced development that benefits everyone, respecting the diversity of civilizations and fostering our awareness of the community of a common destiny. Conflicts, war, terrorism and refugee and migrant crises can all find their roots in poverty and backwardness. Development is fundamental to resolving these global issues. We should seek open, inclusive, innovative and mutually beneficial development outlook for the Mediterranean region, which could help developing countries implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, enhance their capabilities in terms of poverty alleviation — or even elimination — and homegrown development, achieving shared progress and promoting lasting peace.

We should insist on upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, following the new security concept, which is common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable in nature, in a joint effort to build a regional security network. We should construct a partnership that is based dialogue

instead of confrontation or partnership instead of alignment, strengthen dialogue among civilizations and religions, abandon zero-sum thinking, adhere to the general direction of peaceful settlement of disputes, and resolve differences through political means.

The Mediterranean is a strategically important region, rich in natural resources, with a unique cultural background and great potential for development. China is committed to according continued attention to the situation in the Mediterranean region, along with countries of the region and the international community. The Mediterranean region is an important link along the Belt and Road, based on the idea of jointly discussing, building and sharing. In recent years, China has proposed and actively promoted joint implementation of the the Belt and Road Initiative. That proposal has enjoyed a positive response from the international community, including the Mediterranean region. China and the countries of the region have conducted in-depth and results-oriented cooperation on the strengthening of connectivity and the development of infrastructure, and positive progress has been achieved. China will continue to contribute to the realization of stability, security and lasting development in the Mediterranean region and is committed to building the community of a common destiny.

Mr. Rosselli Frieri (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the delegation of Italy for bringing this topic for consideration at this meeting, and I would like to thank you personally, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting. We would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his presence and participation internationaln today's meeting.

The Mediterranean region faces a series of closely linked challenges that are fuelled by the serious crises in Libya, Syria and the Sahel region; the global threat of terrorism and violent extremism, trafficking in persons, international organized crime, the absence of State authority and the effects of climate change, among other factors. These challenges must be addressed with a holistic perspective that considers needs related to security, cooperation, development, human rights and humanitarian law. The causes of extreme poverty, hunger, unemployment and sectarian and religious tensions that can threaten regional stability must be addressed.

Many of these factors have led to massive displacement in recent years of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa in search of a better future. In seeking this future, and before they can cross the Mediterranean in an attempt that often costs them their lives, they become victims of international mafias and criminal groups that exploit their desperate situation and subject them to absolutely inhuman and degrading treatment. Allow me to recall that the displacement of persons does not in itself constitute a threat to international peace and security. As we prepare to begin negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, Uruguay wishes to stress the principle of the non-criminalization of irregular migration and recall that the need to promote and protect human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all should be a cornerstone in addressing this topic.

We remain concerned about the desperate situation of migrants who use Libya as a country of transit to reach Europe. At the same time, this situation puts a lot of pressure on host countries, which by making enormous economic and social efforts to welcome them, are facing difficulties arising from this new reality. Hundreds of thousand sub-Saharan migrants are in Libya right now, waiting for a chance to cross the Mediterranean and they are being subjected to abuse and serious violations of their human rights. In the past few hours, once again, media outlets have reported the sale of slaves in Libya. This is an aberration and must be unanimously condemned by all present in this Chamber. This cannot and should not be tolerated. Only the political and institutional stabilization of Libya will make it possible to significantly counter this phenomenon. With that in mind, we welcome the new action plan and the United Nations road map for Libya, which hope will make it possible to revive a political negotiation process facilitated and lead by the United Nations.

Just two years ago, the world witnessed the greatest refugee and migrant crisis since the Second World War, when hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled the country to escape the worsening conflict, the escalation of violence and the expansion of terrorism. We all remember the images of entire families travelling through Europe, trying to cross borders to find a new life away from the horrors of the war in their homeland. While some have succeeded in their quest, thousands of others, many of them children, drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, which has gone from being a cradle of civilizations to a collective grave for innocent lives.

The challenges in the Mediterranean are an result of this cluster of problems that we have just mentioned. Respect and protection for the human individual must always be at the centre of our work in order to ensure development in that region and achieve peace and security in a stable environment.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his edifying briefing and his personal commitment to addressing the problems that have brought us together today. I would also like to thank the Italian presidency for taking the initiative to hold this important discussion on our common challenges in the Mediterranean. This subject is strategically important when it comes to regional and international security and stability. It is also a humanitarian priority — almost 3,000 people have died in the Mediterranean since the beginning of the year.

I would like to begin by underlining the urgency of tackling security challenges in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean — a crossroads between Europe, Africa and the Middle East — is facing an unprecedented multiplication of regional crises. It is home to multiple humanitarian, security and development challenges, which affect particularly vulnerable populations. It is our responsibility to take collective action against these threats.

The fight against terrorism is the first major challenge and a top priority for France. Increased efforts are needed to address the common challenges posed by terrorism: the return or relocation of foreign terrorist fighters, the use of the Internet by terrorist groups and the financing of terrorism, which will be the focus of an international conference organized in Paris by President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron in April 2018. The links between transnational organized crime and terrorism must also receive our full attention. In both Libya and the Sahel, various trafficking activities carried out by criminal networks are fuelling terrorist groups.

The fight against terrorism also involves continuing to work to protect cultural heritage. Resolution 2347 (2017), adopted in March on the initiative of France and Italy, underscored how the destruction, looting and illicit trafficking in cultural property is contributing to these conflicts. We are looking forward to returning to this topic at the meeting on 30 November.

A second manifestation of the security challenges in the Mediterranean is the migration crisis, which is affecting Europe and leaving millions of people completely destitute. A purely security-oriented approach to the migration issue would be neither desirable nor effective. The migration challenge demands increased European and international cooperation and should encompass the entire migratory route — from the countries of origin to the countries of destination — while respecting the rights of the persons concerned.

That is why our President, in close connection with Italy, has made migration one of France's top priorities. In that regard, I wish to pay tribute to Italy for its considerable efforts to host refugees. On the initiative of President Macron, an international meeting was held in Paris, on 28 August, which led to the adoption of a plan of action on migratory issues in the central Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the countries of origin, Chad and the Niger.

We remain very concerned about the inhuman treatment of migrants who are passing through Libya. We reiterate our appeal to the Libyan authorities to make every effort to ensure that migrants are treated with dignity and respect for their human rights. The EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, which is saving tens of thousands of lives every year and whose mandate was recently renewed, illustrates the European Union's commitment to fighting the smuggling of migrants in the central Mediterranean.

To address these issues over the long term, we must promote a cross-cutting approach, based on cooperation among Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Mediterranean crises will not be resolved without a coherent, long-term political approach that combines security, development and solidarity. Climate change exacerbates development issues in the Mediterranean region and its effects are potential sources of instability and conflict. That was one of the observations made by the Council during its mission to the Lake Chad basin, which I personally found striking.

In the Sahel, France promotes a conmprehensive response based on the pillars of security, development and good governance, as well as education and the prevention of violent extremism. In that spirit, we actively support the Group of Five for the Sahel initiative to establish a joint force to lead cross-border operations in order to combat the transnational threat posed by

terrorism and trafficking in States of the region. We work with the other partners of the Sahel Alliance to further mobilize the principal donors to promote development and good governance in the countries of the Sahel. The political track and implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must progress in parallel. Finally, we will continue to mobilize the international community to support the Joint Force, in line with the ministerial meeting of 30 October 2017 and looking ahead to the Brussels conference. In that regard, we will soon put forward proposals, taking into account both the needs expressed on the ground and the sensitivities around this table.

The crises in the Middle East require political solutions that are inclusive of all populations. That is why France fully supports a negotiated transition in Syria, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). France calls on the international community to support the efforts of the Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, ahead of the Geneva negotiations at the end of the month. That is the only political process that is likely to lead to a lasting political solution.

In Libya, the solution lies in national reconciliation and the restoration of State authority throughout the territory. That is also the best long-term solution to overcoming terrorism and to responding to the challenges of migration. As we said yesterday before the Council (see S/PV.8104), we fully support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ghassan Salamé.

In Gaza, the humanitarian crisis, coupled with an environmental crisis, also has political causes. The intra-Palestinian reconciliation process must continue. We commend the efforts of Egypt in that regard. That process must enable the Palestinian Authority to fully exercise its prerogatives in the Gaza Strip, including in the area of security, and to facilitate the lifting of the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. In our view, that intra-Palestinian reconciliation is inseparable from the resumption of the peace process on the basis of the two-State solution.

Finally, the protection of the rights of all, including people belonging to minorities, is critical to preserving pluralism and diversity in the Middle East, which we strongly support. Together with Jordan, Franc organized the international Paris conference i September 2015, which resulted in the submission of a action plan in support of victims of ethnic and religiou violence in the Middle East. As we recalled this year a the Madrid conference, France is fully committed to th implementation of that plan. It contributed €10 millio euros to the emergency fund.

It will be essential to continue the fight impunit for violations of international humanitarian and huma rights law. Following the adoption of resolution 237 (2017) in September, we welcome the establishment o an investigative team to document the crimes committe by Da'esh in Iraq. Strengthening the role of wome in particular through their effective participation i political processes, must also be an integral part of th response. France will continue to ensure the protectio of children, who remain the first victims of conflicts.

The scale of the challenges seen today calls fo the Security Council and the entire internationa community to play an greater role. Beyond th mobilization of the General Assembly with th negotiation of the agreements on migration and refugee the increased mobilization of the Council is essentia France continues to be committed to strengthenin its cooperation with countries on both shores of th Mediterranean — both European countries and thos of the Maghreb, with whom we maintain particularl close historical and cultural ties. In that spirit, Franc supports the economic development of countries on th southern shores of the Mediterranean, in particular i the context of the Tunisia 2020 initiative.

In conclusion, responding to the multifacete challenges of the Mediterranean area requires comprehensive and integrated approach: preventio peacekeeping and peace-building efforts must b mutually reinforcing in order to be fully effectiv Solidarity with countries neighbouring conflict zone which are at the front line of population displacement is also necessary. More than ever, we must tackle th challenges facing the Mediterranean area. We owe th to the people concerned, to ourselves and to the melti pot of culture, civilization and coexistence that th Mediterranean represents.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.